



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE
DEPUTY SECRETARY

December 15, 2005
Immediate Release

Contact: Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director
Phone: (505) 827-0314

Environment Department Approves Plan to Investigate Ground Water Contamination at Pipeline Spill Near Artesia

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has approved a Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal submitted by Holly Energy Partners to investigate groundwater contamination at a pipeline spill near Artesia, New Mexico.

Holly Energy Partners discovered a leak in one of its eight-inch pipelines about three miles east of Artesia. The pipeline is used to transport gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel from the Navajo Refinery in Artesia to El Paso, Texas. An estimated 100 barrels of fluid were released into the ground.

“In September, Governor Richardson called on the oil and gas industry to clean up their act and help us protect our water, our land, and our public health through tougher, more fair protection of our water quality,” NMED Secretary Ron Curry said. “Spills and leaks like this one can add up and are a threat to our state’s water quality, so we are going to be consistent and continue to work hard to be sure our most important natural resource is protected no matter what industry we’re dealing with.”

Following the excavation, repair and replacement of approximately 206 feet of the pipeline, about 78 barrels of fuel were recovered. Numerous test trenches around the spill area were dug to determine the horizontal extent of the groundwater contamination, six monitoring wells were installed, and five supply wells were identified within a mile of the site. Groundwater is present about eight feet below the ground, and the Pecos River is located about 1.2 miles east of the site.

Some fuel was detected in the groundwater. The five water supply wells have not yet been sampled, nor has the Pecos River. However, monitor wells between the leak and the Pecos indicate a plume has not reached the river.

The Stage 1 Abatement Plan includes an investigation to determine the magnitude and extent of the contamination by installing additional monitoring wells and sampling the groundwater on a quarterly basis. NMED has approved the plan with a few revisions.

New Mexico water quality regulations require responsible parties to remediate groundwater pollution. After the Stage 1 plan has been completed, a Stage 2 cleanup proposal will be submitted to NMED. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Stage 2 plan and request a hearing. Public comment will be sought by NMED within 30 days of NMED's receipt of the cleanup plan.

For additional information, please contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director at (505) 827-0314.

###